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Senate staff backs CIA line on spying

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Washington—The staff of the Senate intelligence committee stopped short yesterday of calling domestic activities by the Central Intelligence Agency illegal as it issued its final report on Operation Chaos, the program under which the CIA spied on Americans.

The CIA charter prohibits the agency from assuming any police or "internal security" functions. Last year, the Rockefeller Commission—which has since been attacked by the Senate committee for being too uncritical of the CIA—said flatly that some of the domestic activities of Operation Chaos were unlawful.

But the staff of the Senate intelligence committee, in a 51-page report on the CIA's domestic operations, held back from making such a judgment, citing statements by a former CIA official, Richard Ober, that Operation Chaos was legal under the CIA's authority to carry out counter-intelligence activity.

Under this line of reasoning—which the CIA has put forth ever since its domestic activities were made public—domestic surveillance by the agency was aimed not at obtaining information about American citizens but rather at learning of any connections between foreign intelligence activities and

American citizens.

The staff report released yesterday says that the laws regarding the CIA's authority can be interpreted in various ways. Under one interpretation, it says, "the basic mission of Chaos to determine the role played by foreign intelligence in domestic dissent violated the CIA's statutory charter."

The Senate staff report contains little new information about the CIA's domestic activities, which included the maintenance of files on thousands of Americans and the infiltration of CIA agents into activist political groups in this country.

The report confirms the general outlines of a New York Times article of December 21, 1974, which first disclosed the agency's domestic operations and which eventually led to the formation of the Senate intelligence committee.

The report also repeats the findings of the Rockefeller Commission that the domestic surveillance was undertaken by the CIA in response to requests by Presidents Johnson and Nixon for information on foreign involvement in the American anti-war movement and in black militant organizations.

According to the Senate staff, the CIA reported on several occasions that it could find no substantial connections between the domestic dissent in this country and foreign intelligence operations, but the two Presidents continued to urge the CIA to keep looking.

Spy panel's powers undecided in Senate

Washington (AP)—The Senate failed yesterday to reach a final decision on how much power to grant a proposed new committee to monitor intelligence activities.

Opponents of the proposed 15-member Senate panel concede they cannot block its creation, but they have introduced amendments that would strip the new panel of much of its power.

The threat of a filibuster has been ended by an agreement to limit debate on the amendments, and the Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.), said final vote on the resolution creating the new committee would come today.